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NWG/RFC# 462
Responding to User Needs

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Network Working Group
Request for Comments 462

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INTRODUCTION 3

The ARPANET is currently undergoing a transition to an environment in which network resources will be made available to a larger user base. This emergent user base already contains a significant number of terminal users not associated with a server site. Information relative to network host services and access characteristics is needed to encourage and assist new users. 3a

To date, the Resources Notebook has been the primary outlet for efforts to provide users with Network-wide information. A separate RFC, from the NIC, discusses the past and current history more completely. In this RFC, we would like to second the NIC's suggestion for the formation of a Working Group concerned with User Information and Services; and we would like to offer a specific suggestion for consideration at the NIC's proposed meeting. 3b

PROPOSAL 4

Many of the problems associated with the lack of adequate Network information are caused by the many compilation steps. Too many resources (most of them human) are required. In addition to delay, errors are introduced. Part of the solution is to place the acquisition of basic information closer to the source and make the source responsible for the acquisition and maintenance. 4a

The "source" is distributed around the Net and, therefore, the proposal is to develop and implement a distributed and extensible network data-base which contains the desired information. This would require each server site to create and maintain an information file locally and/or at the NIC. As a further (more down stream) step, a mechanism to access these files could be specified and implemented. 4a1

People at different sites would thereby be able to use the tools most comfortable and accessible to them. 4a1a

An interesting technical issue involves making the disparate files accessible by an automaton. The NIC is currently attempting to smooth out the interface between NLS and non-NLS files, and this seems like a reasonable object for such efforts.

4alb